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Labor Series

DAVID S. BURGESS

Interviewer: Self

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My name is David S. Burgess. Six months ago my wife Alice and I moved from Montclair, New Jersey, to Benicia in the Bay Area of California. I was Labor Attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in New Delhi from December 1955 to Election Day in 1960.

I was born in New York City on June 15, 1917, and within three months I was in China, where I spent my first nine years. My parents were John Stewart Burgess, Professor of Sociology at Yenching University in Peking. He had been in China since 1909 and previous to that spent four years in Japan. My mother was born and raised in Japan and she married - my mother's maiden name was Stella Fisher - my father on June 19, 1909.

I graduated from Oberlin College in 1939. I majored in history and economics at Oberlin. I spent one year in Washington at the National Institute of Public Affairs as an intern, first in the Wage and Hour Division of the Labor Department and the second half of the year I was Special Research Assistant to Congressman H. Jerry Voorhis of California. Beginning in September 1940 I studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City for two years. I married Alice Stevens on November 20, 1941. We stayed at Union until the end of the academic year in May of 1942. We served two summers and the intervening months working with agricultural migrants in southern New Jersey and southern Florida under the Home Missions Council of the then Federal Council of Churches. I returned to Union and graduated in 1944 and was ordained in the Congregational and Christian Churches, which in 1957 became the United Church of Christ. For the next three years I was a minister to agricultural labor under the Home Missions Council of the Congregational and Christian Churches and was Chaplain to the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. I worked in Arkansas, Tennessee, and southeast Missouri. During 1945 I organized a nation-wide campaign to save 549 farm labor houses built by the Farm Security Administration in nine locations in southeast Missouri. We were able to raise $85,000 from the resident day laborers in the Delmo Homes, trade unions and foundations to save the project from being purchased by local plantation owners. The total sales price for the nine projects was $285,000. By 1954 the resident farm families, at $10 a month, paid off the total project costs. We lived and worked among these families from 1945 to 1947.

In mid-1947 I decided to become a full time CIO labor organizer. I had three assignments with the CIO between 1947 and 1955. For two and a half years I worked for the CIO Southern Organizing Drive paid for by the Textile Workers Union of America, CIO. My wife, our two children and I lived in Rock Hill, South Carolina. I was director of a CIO organizing campaign at the Aragon Mill and other plants owned by J.P. Stevens. We lost the campaign election by a three to two margin. Because of an internecine fight between Emil Rieve, President of the Textile Workers Union, and Vice President George Baldanzi, I left the TWU-CIO when Baldanzi lost his bid to be president of the union in 1948. For the next two years I was a southern organizer for the CIO Political Action Committee and lived with my wife and our three children in Greensboro, North Carolina. I worked chiefly in Virginia and the two Carolinas. During the fall months of 1950 I was in Wisconsin and Iowa working for labor-backed candidates there. In September of 1951 I became the Executive Secretary of the CIO State Council. I lobbied in the State Legislature and operated educational programs for members of both AFL unions and CIO unions. I held this position until June of 1955.

In the previous December at the last CIO National Convention held in Los Angeles, Victor Reuther approached me and asked me if I would be willing to become the Labor Attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in Burma, Rangoon, or if I would be willing also to go to the Embassy as Labor Attachï¿½ in New Delhi if a certain candidate of the U.A.W., Newman Jeffrey, decided not to take that position in India. After some weeks of hesitation I consented. Jeffrey soon dropped out of consideration. I was therefore nominated by the CIO to be the Labor Attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in New Delhi. It was my understanding and that of Secretary of Labor Mitchell and the State Department leaders that Mr. George Meany and Mr. Walter Reuther had been given the opportunity by the State Department to nominate labor attachï¿½s from the respective labor movements at certain embassies around the world. Walter Reuther was given the right to nominate a candidate for the position of Labor Attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in India. He chose me.

Between June 1955 when I left Georgia and November, I moved to Washington and lived at the home of Victor Reuther and his family. I worked for Victor Reuther who headed the International Affairs Office at the CIO Headquarters in Washington. My family, my wife and our four children, not knowing what was going to happen, went to live with my mother-in-law and my father-in-law in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. Mentally we were hanging by our fingernails as I was wondering if I would ever be cleared for the post in India.

The F.B.I. field investigation, as I discovered thirty-three years later, almost knocked me out of contention for this position. This investigation took place at the end of the McCarthy era. After I had read 275 pages of my 400 page F.B.I. file in 1988, I learned that top F.B.I. and State Department officials had opposed my nomination in 1955. I now wonder if the F.B.I. should have the power of declaring a person eligible or ineligible for any position in the Government. It would appear that anybody with a liberal, labor or agitator background had difficulty getting F.B.I. clearance at that time. I don't know how many other people were knocked out by the F.B.I. I was lucky because I had the support of Walter Reuther and to my surprise the support of Senator Walter George of Georgia (the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), who wanted to run for re-election in 1956. He went to bat for me in part, I am sure, because he thought that the AFL and CIO would endorse him if I were cleared and became the Labor Attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in New Delhi, India. In 1956 after I had gone to India, Senator George withdrew from the Democratic Primary and as a result former Governor Herman Talmadge won the primary and was elected to the US Senate in the General Election of 1956. I was finally cleared on November 1, 1955, and I was sworn in as a reserve Foreign Service Officer on that date.

For several weeks I took special training including courses at the Foreign Service Institute. I was briefed by the International Division of the Labor Department and by top labor attachï¿½ officials in the State Department. I visited some officials at the AFL and CIO headquarters just before the amalgamation of these two labor federations. I attended the unity convention of the AFL and CIO held at the 71st Armory in New York City. I was very alarmed at the convention where I heard a speech by President Meany condemning neutralists - that is the Nehru, Nkrumah, Sukarno, Lumumba and others whom he called fellow travelers and Communist stooges. As a result of his speech the INTUC Labor Federation in India, the labor affiliate of the Congress Party and the HMS labor federation affiliated with the Socialist Party, threatened to withdraw from the ICFTU. Before I left Walter Reuther told me that he hoped to come to India to prevent this from happening. He came to India in April of 1956 on this special mission.

Alice, I and four of our kids arrived in New Delhi just after Christmas of 1955. After a month living at Hotel Cecil in Old Delhi, we finally found a home in Friends Colony, south of the city. We were among some of the first Americans to live in this colony. We enjoyed that experience for the next five years very much. My first task in this new job was to try to repair the breach that had resulted from Meany's speech at the first AFL-CIO Convention. Walter Reuther finally arrived in April of 1956 and stayed for a month. I took him all over India. He was introduced to Communist, socialist, and Congress labor leaders. He made a tremendous hit. He spent three hours with Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister. He told me that he was considering the possibility of sending labor union advisors to work with the HMS and INTUC unions. Partly as a result of Walter's trip, the leaders of INTUC and HMS decided not to withdraw from the ICFTU and I was very happy about that.

After his trip to India, I began to realize that there were basic differences in international philosophy and action between these two powerful men, George Meany and Walter Reuther. Meany, in my opinion, was working too closely with agencies of the US Government such as the CIA and the Department of State. He believed that labor unions abroad should be less political and more economic as they were in the United States. He did not look kindly on neutralists such as Nehru and others. Walter Reuther had a much more tolerant attitude towards Third World labor unions and their growth in developing countries. His main concern was how to strengthen these unions, how to help them in the bargaining process. He agreed with Meany that trade unions in India should not be too closely associated with political parties but that wasn't his main criticism. Walter's main criticism was that the Indian labor leaders didn't do solid organizational work; that they didn't prepare themselves for contract negotiations and that they were more dependent on agitation against than they were on negotiations with the employers.

About a year later, I wrote a classified confidential memo to the State Department that stated that our government and the labor movement had to choose between the philosophies of Meany and Reuther. I also realized that Jay Lovestone, Irving Brown, Goldberg and other people - who molded Meany's view of the world - had a certain point of view towards communist nations and 3rd world neutralists. Walter Reuther, who had his difficulties with Communists within the U.A.W., was strongly anti-communist, but because of his connections with the socialist labor movements in Scandinavian countries, France and Germany and the Socialist Party of our own country, I believed that Reuther had a much more tolerant and helpful attitude toward labor unions in India and in other developing countries. I am sure that Meany knew the contents of my confidential dispatch because he and certain AFL-CIO leaders had access to certain State Department classified materials. He probably was suspicious of me because Reuther had nominated me to the post of labor attachï¿½ at the American Embassy in India. This dispatch probably confirmed his worst suspicions about me and led him to inform the White House in 1961 or early 1962 that he was personally opposed to my nomination to any high post in the Kennedy Administration. His opposition dogged me during all of my eleven years as a Foreign Service Officer.

As to my general situation within the Embassy, it couldn't have been better. Looking back on my final years in New Delhi I think these years were almost idyllic. We had two excellent Ambassadors during those five years. The first was former Kentucky Senator John Sherman Cooper, who later became Senator from that state again. He was a fine person, who really understood India. He was succeeded by Ellsworth Bunker, who was also an excellent ambassador. I was given great freedom by my immediate superior who was Ted Maffitt, the Political Counselor and his later successor. I traveled all over India. My travel budget during these five years exceeded the total travel costs of all my political section colleagues within the Embassy. These were the golden years. I was my own boss. I was a team player within the Embassy but I enjoyed great freedom in my work. I was probably known by more Indians outside of Delhi than any other American during my five years in India. I went to every single state of India and became a friend of labor leaders, state and national government leaders, employers, politicians who were also labor leaders, and the various unions affiliated with the Socialist HMS, Congress INTUC, and Communist AITUC federation led by then Parliament Member Dange from Calcutta. I became acquainted with these folks and eventually gained their respect. I was assisted by a full time secretary named Barbara Griffith and an able full time local assistant named P.K.V. Krishnan. Sometimes I had an assistant labor attachï¿½ officer in my office.

The head of the CIA at the Embassy, after I had been in India for two months, came to me and said, "I don't know how the hell you got in the State Department." I said, "Well, I got in." I resisted requests from some of the CIA associates at the Embassy. Later in 1959 in the State of Kerala, I refused to be the carrier of money to bribe labor leaders there during a parliamentary election. The Communists won and have been the ruling party there for many years. The CIA chief at the Embassy was not overjoyed with my refusal. I refused to be associated with CIA operations within the Embassy or outside the Embassy during my years of service in India.

Reuther's visit in 1956 had many good long term results. The members of the National Security Guard in India - those who closely guarded Reuther during his four week visit - told me that he had received the "warmest reception of any American in India since Independence" in 1947. The trip was a smashing success. Reuther was able to persuade the Ford Foundation to underwrite sending trade union leaders from Scandinavian countries and America to India. When Irving Brown as the official representative of the AFL-CIO President came to India a few weeks later I was sitting on the dais with the Labor Minister Khundabhi Desai at my side. This was a summary of Desai's remarks while we were both listening to Irving Brown speak. "Reuther's approach to India is the correct one. His main message is to tell us what the American labor movement does and what the American people have achieved and at the same time he gives some mild advice to us. Brown does it in reverse. He spends little time telling us what goes on in America but gives us extensive advice." Desai later remarked to me that the reason for the success of the Chinese and Russian success in India is the fact that these nations used "the Reuther approach."

I remember going to Walter's house near Detroit during my home leave in 1958 and advising him that it was very well and good for him to criticize the international policies of Meany and Lovestone and Brown. The difficulty was that he, Walter Reuther, and some of the liberal unions in America were not sending their representatives abroad to India and other Third World countries. Until he could get a group from his own union and other unions to come to India frequently, liberal labor attachï¿½s like myself were not protected against criticisms and attacks by AFL-CIO President George Meany and his major international policy adviser Jay Lovestone. My warning proved to be prophetic as I learned when I returned to America in 1960.

In 1958 when Nehru visited the United States, Walter Reuther and Mrs. Roosevelt had planned an informal tete-a-tete at someone's house in Washington. In a letter to me Walter Reuther wrote, "Mrs Roosevelt had worked out a small dinner at which she, Nehru, Chet Bowles, Adlai Stevenson and I were to have a down to earth chat. This unfortunately was messed up by the two striped pants diplomats present. We were forced by the State Department to expand the dinner invitations to include these people. The down-to-earth talk never took place."

I think one of the most fortunate results of Walter's trip was his ability to persuade the US steel industry and the United Steel Workers Union, AFL-CIO, to send technicians to India and also to train Indian steel technicians in American steel plants. In July 1957 I wrote to Walter and Victor and the State Department that 115 steel technicians would arrive in New York City on August 7. 1957, and a second group of such technicians will begin formal training in December of 1957. Then I listed the factories that they were trained at and the US educational institutions that they were connected with. These trips were a direct result of Walter's trip to India in April 1956.

In 1957 I was present as one of the American delegation members at the Asian Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Very little came out of the formal discussions at the conference. I met with some European trade union representatives who were there and we came to the following recommendations which I conveyed to the State Department and various international secretariats. 1) Michael John, President of the TATA Workers Union - INTUC, needs some immediate financial assistance and a trade union advisor from America to work with him in his attempt to strengthen his own union and to organize steel workers at the three new steel plants built by the Soviet Union, West Germany and Great Britain. 2) a representative of the ICFTU should be sent to Indonesia to assist the emerging labor unions there. The name of George Weaver, a US labor official then in Singapore, was suggested for a six months assignment. 3) a report written about plantation workers in Kenya by INTUC plantation organizer M.M. Sharma was most critical of AFL-CIO funds given to Kenyan unions. These unions, Sharma wrote, were not sophisticated and their leaders may use these funds for secondary purposes. After this conference I concluded, "Finally I am convinced that there is little profit of us labor liberals to be over critical of Meany-backed Lovestone operations abroad until we are able to recruit and train some representatives from the more liberal international unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO who will be willing and able to work abroad in a variety of capacities. At present such chaps are few in number and I see few signs that these international unions are doing very much about this recruitment."

In 1958 I made a trip to the three new steel plants that were being constructed, one by British money, another by West German money, and another by Russian money. In a letter to my own mother in January 1958, I wrote after a visit to the Russian-built plant in Bhilai, "The Russians are winning over the Indians not by an ideological approach but by friendly methods. For example, two young Indian steel technicians who had been trained in Russia told me that they never heard politics discussed during 14 months there. The Russian engineers in Bhilai, most of them are simple sons of toil, follow the same line. The construction of the steel plant at Bhilai is already two months ahead schedule. The Russians at the beginning of the construction flatly refused to take sole responsibility for the construction of the plant. Unlike the West Germans at the Rourkela Plant and the British plant who were turning over their completed factories in so-called 'turn key style,' the Russians have made it most plain from the beginning that they are here only to help rather than to direct. Consequently no Indian technician is technically under a Russian. In the end the ever proud Indians much prefer taking the responsibility and getting help from the Russians who came as equals and 'fellow Asians' as they call themselves rather than white superiors. It is obvious to me that the Indian technicians going to Russia are given superior training to those technicians going to the United States. In Russia, I have been told, the Indian technicians are allowed to operate the machinery in training. In the U.S.A. they are only observers rather than participants."

I worked within the Political Section of the Embassy. I worked with other sections too, also with the AID Mission very closely, known as ICA at that time. I was instrumental in getting a labor advisor there to the ICA or AID Mission named Bob Walkinshaw, a staff member in the Boston office of the United Automobile Workers Union, AFL-CIO. He and I worked very closely together for over a year and he remained there after I went back to the United States in November of 1960. I worked closely with the USIA that put out a publication about organized labor. It was a monthly magazine which was circulated all over the country. It was very well received and I was very proud of that. It told much about the labor movement and about labor-management relationships in the United States. I don't feel I had any difficulties carrying out the assignments because of the support of the two Ambassadors I was graced with during my five years there. I was the host to AFL-CIO Vice President Joe Keenan and other members of the labor movement after Walter's visit in 1956. I took them around India. Joe Keenan and I became very close friends until his death.

In 1958 I wrote a letter to a friend containing my conclusions about the situation in India. Quote, "The curse of India is the people's dependence upon their superiors whether they be a land-owners, employers or government officials. The joint family system and the caste system are the root causes of this condition. Of course centuries of colonial rule contributed to the condition. Right now the Government of India has launched the Second Five Year Plan in the head long race to defeat economically Red China to the north. In the area of labor relations national leaders are too inclined to believe that the restriction of the right to strike and the insistence on 'voluntary discipline' are the ways to force the working people to cooperate with the Plan. They forget that the average industrial worker feels like a cog in a machine, has not heard about the Second Five Year Plan and if he had heard about it, he sees no connection between himself and the Plan. It is my belief that the Plan cannot succeed without the cooperation of labor. Workers will not become nation minded until they are encouraged to join unions of their own choice, and to work with private employers and public sector employers through these unions. Essentially although I am aware of need for more physical resources and capital in this country, I am convinced that India faces a crisis in the whole area, for want of another word, of volunteerism. There can be no salvation of this country unless Indian citizens both high and low are willing to assume responsibility for their future and unless national leaders realize that even with a National Five Year Plan, there must be freedom of choice and a certain willingness to allow people to make mistakes and to benefit from these mistakes."

I was greatly impressed with Jaya Prakash Narayan, one of Nehru's closest colleagues during the fight for independence against the British. In 1952 or 1953 Nehru offered him the position of Deputy Prime Minister. JP, as he was popularly called, turned down the offer and shortly thereafter became a leader in the Bhoodan Movement headed by Vinoba Bhave for the distribution of lands to the rural poor. By 1969 the movement had been instrumental in distributing more than four million acres to these poor. JP was active in this movement and the affairs of the Socialist Party of India during my five years in India (1955-1960). We became friends and in 1957 he invited me to spend three days at his ashram near a poor village in the heart of the State of Bihar, which was one of the most poverty-stricken states in India. My lengthy despatch describing my visit and analyzing the role of JP in India puzzled my political counselor Ted Maffitt and Foreign Service Officers manning the India Desk of the State Department back in Washington. They thought that I had been dazzled by this sometime mystical leader of the poor in India and had overrated his importance and influence in India. Most of my critics had never met him. Most of them did not understand that JP remains one of the best men I have ever known. The last time I met him was in Bangkok, Thailand, in early 1971 just before the outbreak of the civil war in East Pakistan - a war which resulted in the defeat of the Pakistani Army and the emergence at the end of 1971 of the independent nation of Bangladesh with the assistance of the Indian Army. JP had come to Thailand to meet with the King of Thailand, the Prime Minister, members of the military and the Parliament. JP was there to convince them that the battle for an independent Bangladesh deserved their moral and financial support. After talking with him, I left confident that he would succeed in his mission. I never saw this impressive man of the spirit again before his death a few years later.

In October 1958 I described the troubled labor situation in Kerala in these terms after the Communists had captured the State Government. "After the initial period of peace and tranquility, the Communist (CPI) Party administration of the State has been running into more and more trouble. The students of the state went on strike when the state upped the rates for boat travel and the CPI Administration was forced to back down. In two strike situations the police controlled by a Communist run state administration have opened fire on plantation workers. This has not helped the Communist reputation. The latest crisis involved a strike of the Communist-controlled Plantation Workers Union in the tea and coffee area of the high ranges of Kerala. Planters were threatened; workers were intimidated; and the Government of India was asked to intervene by the planters. I was able to see the government, labor and plantation officials who during the current crisis went to government offices in Cochin and Trivandrum in order to air their troubles and to convince the government officials that their intervention was most needed. Back of this situation was the fact that the 19th Century method of living in the grand English style is now a thing of the past for most planters, even though many of them still live according to 19th Century standards and still call local people natives. The Central Government is having more difficulty with the situation. The Government wants to protect the planters in order to convince the West that capital investment in India will be profitable. At the same time because of the long history of colonialism it does not want to be associated too closely with the planters of Kerala."

I think that some of my best writing was an essay which I wrote for the Department entitled, "Can Hinduism and Hindu Culture Provide an Ideological Foundation for Democracy in India?" I concluded the long essay with an answer of "no". Modern ways would not come to India, I concluded, because "the reformation of Hinduism has not yet taken place. At present there are few Indian intellectuals who seem to be concerning themselves with Hinduism as such, to say nothing of reforming or finding within the record a past example of wisdom and truth of Hinduism, records which could be a light or guide now. If India really wishes to become a formidable and at the same time a democratic rival to the strong aggressive and totalitarian China, she must import some ideology and techniques from the democratic West. Unless this nation is able to discover a new and distinctive democratic faith which has definite, indispensable linkages to the democratic elements of her past, her efforts to imitate the developed democratic countries of the West will fail. India must find her own soul, her own faith and her own distinctive form of a democratic ideology if she is to save herself."

In mid-1960 a few months before I was scheduled to depart India, I was asked by the Government of India to negotiate a settlement of a nation-wide strike in August of that year called by postal workers, railroad workers and other workers in the public sector. I tried the best I could to talk to both of the contending parties but unfortunately the Home Minister under the Central Services Maintenance Act of 1956 declared the strike illegal and proceeded to arrest the strike leaders before I had met them and key government officials. I had had permission of Ambassador Bunker to assume this role at that time.With my wife Alice and our five children - our youngest son was born in New Delhi in 1957 - I left India on Election Day 1960. I wrote a final despatch with the following conclusion: "Fearing that the leaders of Pakistan might launch a holy war against India as a means of preserving their power and creating unity among their divided and poverty-stricken people, the Government of India is not only critical to America's arms aid to Pakistan but also is charging that America is a nation which puts its primary faith in armed might, atomic bombs and gunboat diplomacy. Added to these governmental criticisms of America is the popular view that America is rich, materialistic, devoid of culture, gadget-ridden, and populated by people who have no understanding of India's problems. These critics fail to realize that the fundamental greatness of America is not in its impressive material accomplishments. It lies instead in the ability of most Americans to face her own nation's problems frankly such as economic inequalities and racial discrimination. It lies in America's essential equalitarianism and in the dignity of the individual in most parts of the country, factors which are in most striking contrast to the great chasm of inequality dividing the rulers from the ruled in the totalitarian countries of the U.S.S.R. and Red China. We have the Bill of Rights, which in many ways has become the foundation stone for the struggle against colonialism in India, Asia, and Africa. We have built a great country because our liberties have made cornerstones of our society."

When I got back to America, I took the regular Foreign Service examination, passed it and was sworn in as an FSO-2 in May. In 1962 when I was nominated to high position in AID, Meany informed Ralph Dungan, an official at Kennedy's White House, that he was opposed to my being appointed to any high position in the Kennedy Administration. Walter Reuther, when he was informed about Meany's action, voiced his objection to Dungan and other White House officials - but in vain. Dungan called me to the White House and gave me the bad news. I asked Keenan to make an appointment for me with Meany. I met Meany but nothing changed.

I had the following jobs after my five years in India. In 1961 I became the Director of the Office of Indonesian and Burmese Affairs at the AID Headquarters in Washington for two years. I was a member of two teams sent to Indonesia, one so-called "Humphry Mission" in 1961, and then in 1962 a civic action mission at the request of the Indonesian armed forces. In the beginning of 1963 Peace Corps Director Sargent Shriver asked me to serve as the Peace Corps Director in Indonesia. This I did and remained there until March of 1964. I came back and was put in charge for about 14 months of the blue collar recruiting section of the Peace Corps. I and my staff recruited roughly 2,500 industrial and construction workers with the help of management, the AFL-CIO Headquarters and several international unions. Particularly helpful were CWA President Joe Bierne of the CWA and George Meany himself. From 1965 to 1966 I was on the Examination Board of the Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service.

I decided in 1966 that I really didn't want to stay on with the State Department for three reasons: 1) George Meany opposed my elevation within the Department as I found out in 1961. 2) I disagreed with the foreign policy of the Johnson Administration regarding Vietnam. 3) on the whole I didn't feel that I had any future in the Foreign Service. I therefore applied for a position at the Headquarters of UNICEF where Harry L. Labouisse was the new Executive Director. He had headed AID back in 1961. I had to go through another field investigation by the F.B.I. I finally obtained a position at the Far East Regional Office of UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund in Bangkok. I first was the Director of Programs in Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Then I became the Deputy Regional Director from 1968 until early 1972. The region had programs in 11 countries of East Asia. When I went back to the States in 1972 I became a special assistant to UNICEF Executive Director Henry R. Labouisse with the duties of traveling all over the United States and Canada speaking about the needs of children abroad. In 1977 at the age of 60 I retired from UNICEF. I worked for a little less than a year at Harvard University as the head of the Latin American Scholarship Program of American Universities. I resigned from that position in mid-1978. Starting on January 1, 1979, I became the Minister of two United Church of Christ churches in Newark, the Zion Church and St. Stephen's Church. I was Minister of Zion Church until 1986 and Minister of St. Stephen's Church until 1989. In 1981 and from 1984 to 1990 I was the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Ecumenical Ministry or MEM as it was called. This was an ecumenical ministry of Catholic and Protestant churches in Newark and Essex County. We had programs in higher education, getting parents involved in public education, a toxic waste program, a labor youth employment program and a program to save public housing. I was instrumental in organizing a city wide coalition in 1988 and 1989 which saved 39 public housing high-rise structure containing 4,500 apartments from being destroyed by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Newark Housing Authority (NHA). The Authority agreed to rehabilitate more than 1700 long vacant apartments. The HUD agreed to build replacement apartments on a one-for-one basis in the event that any existing apartments were demolished in the future. This one-for-one replacement agreement was in conformance with the provisions of the Omnibus Housing Act of 1988 signed by President Reagan that year.

I had a mild heart attack in October 1989 and came to the conclusion that sometime in 1990 I should retire. I retired officially in mid-September 1990 and moved to Benicia in the Bay Area of California. I am doing some work with Habitat for Humanity here and various other agencies and I think I am very happy. I would be glad to be helpful in any way in this program of making the labor attachï¿½ work stronger the world over.

Let me close with a comment. It is my belief that we should have more rather than less full time labor officials becoming part of the State Department for limited assignments abroad as labor attachï¿½s. I strongly believe that the decision of the State Department a few years ago to stop recruiting labor attachï¿½s from the labor movement was a very bad mistake and I regret it very much because I think that labor attachï¿½s from the US labor movement add something of substance to the Foreign Service that otherwise might not be there. I wish Morris Weisz and his colleague well in their study. You can count on me for any cooperation if you wish it. Thank you.

End of interview